

A
L E T T E R

F R O M

EDMUND BURKE, Esq;

I N

VINDICATION OF HIS CONDUCT

WITH REGARD TO THE

AFFAIRS OF IRELAND.

ADDRESSED TO

THOMAS BURGH, Esq.

Member of Parliament for Athy.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. BEW, PATER-NOSTER ROW:

And, D U B L I N,

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ADVERTISEMENT
TO THE LONDON EDITION.

THE following letter, which is handed about in a manuscript in Dublin, as the production of one of the first genuises of that or any other country, is intended as a vindication of his conduct in the British parliament relative to the affairs of Ireland. The style alone will be sufficient to prove it genuine. It may be necessary, perhaps, to apologize to the author, for making public what had been only privately communicated. In common with his countrymen, the gentleman, who gives this letter to the public, censured a conduct which this letter has taught him to think praise-worthy; he wishes the world at large to receive the same impressions with himself, and to view the character of the most amiable man of the present times, as much above the narrow views of faction or party, as his literary talents

talents exceed those of his enemies or defamers. And he hopes he does a service to the world, by rescuing from obscurity a composition to which the public have so just a claim; and he trusts that the gentleman to whom this letter was addressed, will not think himself used hardly by the divulging those sentiments to which the public have a claim, in preference of any private individual however respectable.

A LETTER

A

L E T T E R, &c.

To T. B. Esq;

My dear Sir,

I Don't know in what manner I am to thank you properly for the very friendly solicitude you have been so good as to exprefs for my reputation. The concern you have done me the honour to take in my affairs, will be an ample indemnity for all that I may suffer from the rapid judgments of those who choose to form their opinions of men, not from the life, but from their portraits in a
news-

news-paper. I confess to you, that my frame of mind is so contracted, I have in me so little of the constitution of a great man, that I am more gratified with a very moderate share of approbation from those few who know me, than I should be with the most clamorous applause from the multitudes who love to admire at a due distance. I am not, however, stoic enough to be able to affirm with truth, or hypocrite enough affectedly to pretend, that I am wholly unmoved at the difficulty which you and other of my friends in Ireland have found in vindicating my conduct towards my native country: it undoubtedly hurts me in some degree; but the wound is not very deep. If I had sought popularity in Ireland, when, in the cause of that country, I was ready to sacrifice, and did sacrifice, a much nearer, a much more immediate, and a much more advantageous popularity here, I should find myself perfectly

fectly unhappy, because I should be totally disappointed in my expectations; because I should discover, when it was too late, what common-sense might have told me very early, that I risked the capital of my fame in the most disadvantageous lottery in the world. But I acted then, as I act now, and I hope I shall act always, from a strong impulse of right, and from motives in which popularity, either here, or there, has but a very little part: with the support of that consciousness, I can bear a good deal of the coquetry of public opinion; which has her caprices and must have her ways. *Miseri quibus intentata nitet.* I, too, have had my holiday of popularity in *Ireland*; I have even heard of an intention to erect a statue. I believe my intimate acquaintance know how little that idea was encouraged by me; and I was sincerely glad that it never took effect. Such honours belong exclusively to the

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tomb,

tomb, the natural and only period of human inconstancy, with regard either to desert or to opinion; for they are the very same hands which erect, that very frequently (and sometimes with reason enough) pluck down the statue. Had such an unmerited and unlooked-for compliment been paid to me two years ago, the pavements of the piece might at this hour have the advantage of seeing actual service, while they were moving, according to the law of projectiles, to the windows of the A——y G——l, or of my old friend M—k M—n.

To speak seriously, let me assure you, my dear Sir, that, though I am not permitted to rejoice at all its effects, there is not one man at your side of the water more pleased to see the situation of *Ireland* so prosperous, as that she can afford to throw away her friends. She has obtained solely by her own efforts the fruits
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of a great victory, which I am very ready to allow that the best efforts of her best well-wishers here could not have done for her so effectually in a great number of years, and perhaps could not have done at all. I could wish, however, merely for the sake of her own dignity, that, in turning her poor relations and antiquated friends out of doors (though one of the most common effects of new prosperity,) she had thought proper to dismiss us with fewer tokens of unkindness. It is true, that there is no sort of danger in affronting men who are not of importance enough to have any trust of ministerial, of royal, or of national honour to surrender. The unforced and unbought services of humble men, who have no medium of influence in great assemblies, but through the precarious force of reason, must be looked upon with contempt, by those who, by their wisdom and spirit, have improved the

critical moment of their fortune, and have debated with authority against pusillanimous dissent and ungracious compliance, at the head of forty thousand men.

Such feeble auxiliaries (as I talk of) to such a force employed against such resistance, I must own, in the present moment, very little worthy of your attention; yet, if one were to look forward, it scarcely seems altogether politick to bestow so much liberality of invective on the Whiggs of this kingdom, as I find it has been the fashion to do both in and out of parliament. That you should pay compliments in some tone or other, whether ironical or serious, to the minister from whose imbecillity you have extorted what you could never obtain from his bounty, is not unnatural in the first effusions of parliamentary gratitude to that minister, for the early and voluntary benefits

nefits he has conferred upon Ireland. It might appear that you were wanting to the triumph of his surrender, if you did not lead some of his enemies captive before him; neither could you feast him with decorum, if his particular taste were not consulted. A minister who has never defended his measures in any other way than by railing at his adversaries, cannot have his palate made all at once to the relish of positive commendation. I cannot deny but that on this occasion there was displayed a great deal of the good breeding, which consists in the accommodation of the entertainment to the relish of the guests.

But that ceremony being past, it would not be unworthy of the wisdom of Ireland, to consider what consequences the extinguishing every spark of freedom in this country may have upon your own liberties. You are at this instant flushed with

victory, and full of the confidence natural to recent and untried power. We are in a temper equally natural, though very different :—We feel as men do, who, having placed an unbounded reliance on their force, have found it totally to fail on trial :—We feel faint and heartless, and without the smallest degree of self-opinion :—in plain words, we are *cowed*. When men give up their violence and injustice without a struggle, their condition is next to desperate. Where no art, no management is necessary to abate their pride, and overcome their prejudices; and their uneasiness only excites an obscure and feeble rattling in their throat; their final dissolution seems not far off. In this miserable state we are still further depressed by the over-bearing influence of the crown: it acts with the officious cruelty of a mercenary nurse, who, under pretence of tenderness, stifles us with our clothes, and plucks the pillow from our heads. *Injunctu multæ vestis opprimi senem*

senem jubet. Under this influence, we have so little will of our own, that, even in any apparent activity we may be got to assume, I may say, without any violence to sense, and with very little to language, we are merely passive. We have yielded to your demands this session; in the last session we refused to prevent them. In both cases, the passive and the active, our principle was the same. Had the crown pleased to retain the spirit with regard to Ireland, which seems to be now all directed to America, we should have neglected our own immediate defence, and sent over the last man of our militia, to fight with the last man of your volunteers.

To this influence, the principle of action, the principle of policy, and the principle of union of the present minority, are opposed. These principles of the opposition are the only thing which preserves

serves a single symptom of life in the nation. That opposition is composed of the far greater part of the independent property and independent rank in the kingdom, of whatever is most untainted in character, of whatever ability remains unextinguished in the people; and all which tends to draw the attention of foreign countries upon this. It is now in its final and conclusive struggle; it has to struggle against a force to which, I am afraid, it is not equal. The whole kingdom of Scotland ranges with the venal, the unprincipled, and the wrong principled of this; and if the kingdom of Ireland thinks proper to pass into the same camp, we shall certainly be obliged to quit the field. In that case, if I know any-thing of this country, another constitutional opposition can never be formed on it: and, if this be impossible, it will be at least as much so (if there can be degrees in impossibility) to have a constitutional

tutional administration at any future time. The possibility of the former is the only security for the existence of the latter. Whether the present administration be in the least like one, I must venture to doubt, even in the honey-moon of the Irish fondness to Lord North, which has succeeded to all their flapping and scratching.

If liberty cannot maintain its ground in this kingdom, I am sure that it cannot have any long continuance in yours. Our liberty might now and then jar and strike a discord with that of Ireland; the thing is possible; but still the instruments might play in concert: but, if ours be unstrung, yours will be hung up on a peg, and both will be mute for ever. Your new military force may give you confidence; and it serves for a turn: but you and I know that it has no root;
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it is not perennial, and would prove but a poor shelter for your liberty, when this nation, having no interest in its own, could only look upon yours with the eyes of envy and disgust. I cannot, therefore, help thinking, and telling you what, with great submission I think, that, if the Parliament of Ireland be so zealous of the spirit of our common constitution as she seems to be, it was not so discreet to mix with the panegyrick on the minister so large a portion of acrimony to the independent part of this nation. You never received any sort of injury from them, and you are grown to that degree of importance, that the discourses in your parliament will have a much greater effect on our immediate fortune, than our conversation can have upon yours:—in the end they will seriously affect both.

I have

I have looked back upon our conduct, and our public conversations, in order to discover what it is that can have given you offence. I have done so, because I am ready to admit, that to offend you without cause, would be as contrary to true policy, as, I am sure, it must be to the inclinations of almost every one of us.—About two years ago Lord Nugent moved six propositions in favour of Ireland, in the House of Commons. At the time of the motions, and during the debate, Lord North was either wholly out of the house, or engaged in other matters of business or pleasantries. In the remotest recesses of the West-Saxon corner, he took no part whatsoever in the affair; But it was supposed his neutrality was more inclined towards the side of favour. The mover being a person in office, was, however, the only indication that was given of such a leaning.

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We, who supported the propositions, finding them better relished than at first we looked for, pursued our advantage, and began to open a way for more essential benefits to Ireland: on the other hand, those who had hitherto opposed them in vain, redoubled their efforts, and became exceedingly clamorous. Then it was, that Lord North found it necessary to come out of his fastness, and to interpose between the contending parties. In this character of mediator, he declared, that, if any thing beyond the first six resolutions should be attempted, he would oppose the whole; but that, if we rested there, the original motions should have his support. On this a sort of conversation took place between him and the managers of the Irish business, in which the six resolutions were to be considered as a sort of *uti possidetis*, and to be held sacred.

By

By this time other parties began to appear : a good many of the trading towns and manufactures of various kinds took the alarm ; petitions crowded in upon one another ; and the bar was occupied by a formidable body of council. Lord North was staggered by this new battery. He is not of a constitution to encounter such an opposition as had then arisen, when there were no other objects in view than those that were then before the house. In order not to lose him, we were obliged to abandon, bit by bit, the most considerable parts of the original agreement.

In several parts, however, he continued fair and firm. For my own part, I acted, as I trust I commonly do, with decision ; I saw very well, that the things we had got were of no great consideration ; but they were, even in their defects, somewhat leading. I was in hopes that we
might

might obtain gradually, and by parts, what we might attempt at once, and in the whole, without success; that one concession would lead another; and that the people of England discovering, by a progressive experience, that none of the concessions actually made were followed by the consequences they had dreaded, their fears from what they were yet to yield would considerably diminish. But that to which I attached myself the most particularly was, to fix the principle of a free trade in all the ports of the islands, as founded in justice, and beneficial to the whole, but principally to this the seat of the supreme power; and this I laboured to the utmost of my might, upon general principles, illustrated by all the commercial detail with which my little enquiries in life were able to furnish me. I ought to forget such trifling things as those which concern myself; and, possibly,

fibly, I might have forgotten them, if the Lord Advocate of Scotland had not, in a very flattering manner, revived them in my memory, in a full house in this session. He told me, that my arguments, such as they were, made him change the opinion with which he had come into the house strongly impressed. I am sure, that, at the time, at least twenty more told me the same thing. I certainly ought not to take their style of compliment as a testimony to fact; neither do I: but all this shewed sufficiently, not what they thought of my ability, but what they saw of my zeal. I could say more in proof of the effects of that zeal, and of the unceasing industry with which I then acted, both in my endeavours which were apparent, and those that were not so visible. Let it be remembered I shewed those dispositions while the parliament of England was in
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a capacity to deliberate, and in a situation to refuse; when there was something to be risked here, by being suspected of a partiality to Ireland; when there was an honourable danger attending the profession of friendship to you, which heightened its relish, and made it worthy of a reception in manly minds: But, as for the awkward and nauseous parade of debate without opposition, the flimsy device of tricking out necessity, and disguising it in the habit of choice, the shallow stratagem of defending by argument what all the world must perceive is yielded to force; these are a sort of acts of friendship, which I am sorry that any of my countrymen should require of their real friends; they are things not to my taste; and, if they are looked upon as tests of friendship, I desire for one, that I may be considered as an enemy.

—What party-purpose did my conduct
answer

answer at that time? I acted with Lord North; I went to all the ministerial meetings: and he and his associates in office will do me the justice to say, that, aiming at the concord of the empire, I made it my business to give her concessions all the value of which they were capable; whilst some of those who were covered with his favours, derogated from them, treated them with contempt, and openly threatened to oppose them. If I had acted with my dearest and most valued friends; if I had acted with the Marquis of Rockingham, or the Duke of Richmond, in that situation; I could not have attended more to their honour, or endeavoured more earnestly to give efficacy to the measures I had taken in common with them. The return which I, and all who acted as I did, have met with from him, does not make me repent the conduct which I there held.

As to the rest of the gentlemen with whom I had the honour to act, they did not then, or at any other time, make a party-affair of Irish politicks. That matter was always taken up without concert, but in general from the operation of our known liberal principles in government, in commerce, in religion, in every thing: it was taken up favourably for Ireland, where some local interests bore hard upon the members. They acted on the sense of their constituents; upon ideas, which, though I do not always follow, I can never blame: however, two or three persons, high in opposition, and high in publick esteem, ran great risks in their boroughs on the occasion. But all this was without any particular plan. I need not say, that Ireland was, in that affair, much obliged to the liberal mind and enlarged understanding of Charles Fox. Mr. Townshend, Lord
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Middleton, and others, likewise, distinguished themselves. On reviewing the whole of that affair, which gave rise to all the subsequent manœuvres, I am convinced, that the whole of what has this day been done, might have been at that time effected; but then the minister must have taken it up as a great plan of national policy, and paid with his person in every lodgment of his approach. He must have used that influence to quiet prejudice, which he has so often used to corrupt principle; and I know that, if he had, he must have succeeded. Many of the most active in opposition would have given him an unequivocal support. The corporation of London, and the great body of the London West-India Merchants and Planters, which forms the greatest mass of that vast interest, were disposed to fall in with such a plan; they constantly

gave no sort of discountenance to what was done, or what was proposed. But these are not the kind of objects for which our ministers bring out the heavy artillery of the state; therefore, as those things stood at that time, a great deal more was not practicable.—Last year, another proposition was brought for the relief of Ireland; it was started without any communication with a single person of activity in the country party, and, as it should seem, without any kind of concert with government: it appeared to me extremely raw and indigested. The behaviour of Lord North on the opening of that business was the exact transcript of his conduct on the Irish question of the former session; it was a mode of proceeding, which his nature has wrought into the texture of his politicks, and which is inseparable from them. He chose to absent himself on the proposition, and during

during the agitation of that business, although the business of the house is that alone for which he has any kind of relish, or, as I am told, can be persuaded to listen to with any degree of attention: but he was willing to let it take its course. If it should pass without any considerable difficulty, he would bring his acquiescence to tell for merit in Ireland; and he would have the credit, out of his indolence, of giving quiet to that country. If difficulties should arise on the part of England, he knew that the house was so well trained, that he might at his pleasure call us from the hottest scent. As he acted in his usual manner, and upon his usual principles, opposition acted upon theirs, and rather generally supported the measure. As to myself, I expressed a disapprobation at the practice of bringing imperfect and undigested projects into the house, before

means were used to quiet the clamours which a misconception of what we were doing might occasion at home, and before measures were settled with men of weight and authority in Ireland, in order to render our acts useful and acceptable to that country. I said, that the only thing which could make the influence of the crown (enormous without as well as within the house) in any degree tolerable, was, that it might be employed to give something of order and system to the proceedings of a popular assembly; that government being so situated as to have a large range of prospect, and, as it were, a bird-view of every thing, they might see distant dangers and distant advantages, which were not so visible to those who stood on the common level: they might besides observe, from this advantage, things in their relative and combined state, which people locally

cally instructed and partially informed could behold only in an insulated and unconnected manner : but that, for many years past, we suffered under all the evils, without any one of the advantages, of a government influence ; that the business of ministers, or of those who acted as such, had been still further to contract the narrowness of man's ideas, to confirm inveterate prejudices, to inflame vulgar passions, and to abate all sorts of popular rights and privileges ; so far from methodizing the business of the house, they had let all things run into an inextricable confusion, and had left affairs of the most delicate policy wholly to chance.

After I had expressed myself with the warmth I felt on seeing all order and government burst under the ruins of liberty, and after I had made my protest
against

against the insufficiency of the propositions, I supported the principle of enlargement which they aimed at, though short and somewhat wide of the mark, giving as my sole reason, that the more frequently those matters came into discussion, the more it would tend to dispel fears and to eradicate prejudices.

This was the only part I took; the detail was in the hands of Lord Newhaven and Lord Beauchamp, with some assistance from Earl Nugent, and a few independent gentlemen of Irish property. The dead weight of the minister being removed, the house recovered its tone and elasticity. We had a temporary appearance of deliberate character: the business was debated freely on both sides, and with sufficient temper; and the sense of the members being influenced by nothing but what will naturally influence
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men unbought, their reason and their prejudice: these two principles had a fair conflict, and prejudice was obliged to give way to reason;—a majority appeared, on a division, in favour of the propositions.

As these proceedings got out of doors, Glasgow and Manchester, and I think Liverpool, began to move, but in a manner much more slow and languid than formerly; and nothing, in my opinion, would have been less difficult, than entirely to have overborne their opposition. The London East-India trade was, as on the former occasion, so on this, perfectly liberal and quiet; and there is abroad so much respect for the united wisdom of the house, when supposed to act upon a fair view of political situation, that I scarcely ever remember any considerable uneasiness out of doors, when the most
active

active members, and those of most property and consideration, in the minority, have joined themselves to the administration. Many factious people in the towns mentioned began, indeed, to revile Lord North, and to reproach his neutrality as treacherous and ungrateful to those who had so heartily and so warmly entered into all his views with regard to America.

That noble Lord, whose decided character it is to give way to the latest and nearest pleasure, without any sort of regard to distant consequences of any kind, thought fit to appear, on this signification of the pleasure of those his worthy friends and partizans, and, putting himself at the head of the *posse Scaccarii*, wholly regardless of the dignity and consistency of our miserable house, drove the proposition entirely out of doors

doors, by a majority newly summoned to duty.

In order to atone to Ireland for this gratification to Manchester, he graciously permitted, or rather forwarded, two bills; that for encouraging the growth of tobacco, and that for giving a bounty on exportation of hemp from Ireland. They were brought in by two very worthy members, and on good principles: but I was sorry to see them; and, after expressing my doubts of their propriety, left the house. Little else was said upon them. My objections were two: the first, that the cultivation of those weeds (if one of them could be at all cultivated to profit) was adverse to the introduction of a good course of agriculture; the other, that the encouragement given to them, tended to establish that mischievous policy of considering Ireland as a
country

country of staple, and a producer of raw materials.

When the rejection of the first proposition, and the acceptance of the last, had jointly, as it was natural, raised a very strong discontent in Ireland, Lord Rockingham, who had frequently said that there never seemed a more opportune time for the relief of Ireland, than that moment when Lord North had rejected all rational propositions for its relief, without consulting, I believe, any one living, did what he is not very often willing to do; but he thought this an occasion of magnitude enough to justify an extraordinary step:—he went into the closet, and made a strong representation to the King; which was not ill received, and I believe produced good effects. He then made the motion in the House of Lords which you may recollect; but he
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was content to withdraw it, on the solemn promise of ministry, that they would, in the recess of parliament, prepare a plan for the benefit of Ireland, and have it in readiness to produce the next meeting. You may recollect that Lord Gower became in a particular manner bound for the fulfilling this engagement. Even this did not satisfy; and most of the minority were very unwilling that parliament should be prorogued until something effectual on the subject should be done: particularly as we saw that the distresses, discontents, and armaments of Ireland, were encreasing every day; and we were not so much lost to common sense, as not to know the wisdom and efficacy of early concession in circumstances such as ours.

The session was now at an end. The ministers, instead of attending to a duty that

that was so urgent on them, employed themselves, as usual, in endeavours to destroy the reputation of those who were bold enough to remind them of it. They caused it to be industriously circulated through the nation, that the distresses of Ireland were of a nature hard to be traced to the true source; that they had been monstrously magnified; and that, in particular, the official reports from Ireland had given the lie (that was their pleasure) to Lord Rockingham's representations; and, attributing the origin of the Irish proceedings wholly to us, they asserted that every thing done in parliament upon the subject was with a view of stirring up rebellion; "that neither the Irish legislature, nor their constituents, had signified any dissatisfaction at the relief obtained (in the session preceding the last); that, to convince both of the impropriety of their peaceable conduct, " opposition,

“opposition, by making demands in the
 “name of Ireland, pointed out what she
 “might extort from Great Britain; that
 “the facility with which relief was (for-
 “merly) granted, instead of satisfying
 “opposition, was calculated to create new
 “demands—these demands, as they in-
 “terfered with the commerce of Great
 “Britain, were certain of being opposed;
 “a circumstance which could not fail to
 “create that desirable confusion which
 “suits the views of the party—that they
 “(the Irish) had long felt their own mis-
 “ery, without knowing well from whence
 “it came—our worthy patriots, by point-
 “ing out Great Britain as the cause of
 “Irish distress, may have some chance of
 “rousing Irish resentment.” This I
 quote from a pamphlet as perfectly con-
 temptible in point of writing, as it is
 false in its facts, and wicked in its design;
 but, as it is written under the authority
 of

of ministers, by one of their principal literary pensioners, and was circulated with great diligence, and, as I am credibly informed, at a considerable expence to the public, I use the words of that book, to let you see in what manner the friends and patrons of Ireland, the heroes of your parliament, represented all efforts for your relief here; what means they took to dispose the minds of the people towards that great object; and what encouragement they gave to all who should choose to exert themselves in your favour. Their unwearied endeavours were not wholly without success, and the unthinking people in many places became ill affected towards us on this account; for the ministers proceeded in your affairs just as they did with regard to those of America:—they always represented you as a parcel of blockheads, without sense, or even feeling; that all your words

were

were only the echoes of faction here; and, as you have seen above, that you had not understanding enough to know that your trade was cramped by restrictive acts of the British parliament, unless we had, for factious purposes, given you the information.

They were so far from giving the least intimation of the measures which have since taken place, that those, who were supposed the most to know their intentions, declared them impossible, in the actual state of the two kingdoms; and spoke of nothing but an act of union, as the only way that could be found of giving freedom of trade to Ireland, consistently with the interests of this kingdom. Even when the session opened, Lord North declared, that he did not know what remedy to apply to a disease, of the cause of which he was ignorant;

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and,

and, not being then entirely resolved how far they should submit to your energy, they, by anticipation, set the above author, or some of his associates, to fill the news-papers with invectives against us as distressing the minister by extravagant demands in favour of Ireland.

I need not inform you that every thing they asserted of the steps taken in Ireland, as the result of our machinations, was utterly false and groundless. For myself, I sincerely protest to you, that I neither wrote a word nor received a line upon any matter relative to the trade of Ireland, or to the politicks of it, from the beginning of the last session to the day that I was honoured with your letter (of December 20th, 1779). It would be an affront to the talents in the Irish parliament to say one word more.

What

What was done in Ireland during that period, in and out of parliament, never will be forgotten:—you raised an army, new in its kind, and adequate to its purposes. It effected its ends without its exertion. It was not under the authority of law most certainly; but it derived from an authority still higher; and, as they say of faith, it is not contrary to reason, but above it; so this army did not so much contradict the spirit of the law, as supersede it. What you did in the legislative body is above all praise. By your proceeding with regard to the supplies, you revived the grand characteristic benefit of parliament, which was on the point of being entirely lost amongst us. These sentiments I never concealed, and never shall; and Mr. Fox expressed them with his usual power when he spoke on the occasion.

All this is very honourable to you ; but in what light must we see it ? How are we to consider your armament without commission from the crown, when some of the first people in this kingdom have been refused arms at the time they did not only reject, but solicited, the King's commissions. Here to arm and embody would be represented as little less than high treason, if done on private authority : with you it receives the thanks of a privy counsellor of Great Britain, who obeys the Irish House of Lords in that point with pleasure, and is made secretary of state the moment he lands here, for his reward. You shortened the credit given to the crown for six months ; you hung up the publick credit of your kingdom by a thread ; you refused to raise any taxes, whilst you confessed the publick debt and publick exigencies to be great and urgent beyond example ;

example; — you certainly acted in a great style, and on sound and invincible principles; but, if we, in the opposition which fills Ireland with such loyal honors, had even attempted, what we never did even attempt, the smallest delay, or the smallest line taken off the supply, in order to a constitutional coercion of the crown, we should have been decried, by all the court and tory mouths of this kingdom, as a desperate faction aiming at the direct ruin of the country, and to surrender it bound hand and foot to a foreign enemy. For actually doing what we never ventured to attempt, you have paid your court with such address, and have won so much favour with his Majesty and his cabinet, that they have, of their special grace and mere motion, raised you to new titles; and, for the first time, in a speech from the throne, complimented you with the appellation of “faithful and loyal;”

and, in order to insult our low-spirited and degenerate obedience, have thrown these epithets and your resistance together in our teeth. What do you think were the feelings of every man, who looks upon parliament in an higher light than that of a market overt for legalising a base traffick of votes and pensions, when he saw you employ such means of coercion to the crown, in order to coerce parliament through that medium? How much his majesty is pleased with his part of the civility must be left to his own taste; but, as to us, you declare to the world, that you knew that the sole way of bringing us to reason, was to apply yourselves to the true source of all our opinions, and the only motive of all our conduct. Now, it seems, you think yourselves affronted, because a few of us express some indignation at the minister, who has thought fit to strip us stark naked,

naked, and expose the true state of our
 poxed and pestilential habit to the world.
 Think or say what they will in Ireland,
 I shall ever think it a crime hardly to be
 expiated by his blood. He might, and
 ought, by a longer continuance, or by an
 earlier meeting of parliament, to have
 given our concession the air of benignity,
 by making it a voluntary act; or he
 might have given us the credit of some
 wisdom in foreseeing and anticipating an
 approaching force:—so far from it, Lord
 Gower, coming out of his own cabinet,
 declares that one principal cause of his
 resignation was his not being able to pre-
 vail on the present minister to give any
 sort of application to this business. Even
 on the late meeting, nothing determinate
 could be drawn from him, or from any
 of his associates, until they had actually
 passed the short money-bill, which mea-
 sure they flattered themselves, and assured
 others

others, you would never come up to. Disappointed in their expectation of seeing the siege raised, they surrendered at discretion.

Judge, my dear Sir, of our surprize at finding your censure directed against those whose only crime consisted in accusing the ministers of not having prevented your demands by our graces; of not having given you the natural advantages of your country, in the most ample, the most early, and the most liberal manner; and for not having relaxed authority in such a manner as to ensure friendship. That you should make the panegyrick of the ministers, is what I expected; because, in praising their bounty, you paid a just compliment to your own force: but, that you should rail at us, either individually or collectively, is what I can scarcely think a natural

natural proceeding. — I can easily conceive, that gentlemen might grow frightened at what they had done; that they might imagine they had undertaken a business above their hand; that the instruments of their power might be too vast and unmanageable for their direction; that, having obtained a state of independence for their country, they meant to take the deserted helm into their own hands, and to supply by their very real abilities the total insufficiency of the nominal government: all these might be real, and might be very justifiable motives for their reconciling themselves cordially to the present court-system; but I do not so well discern the reasons that could induce them, at the first feeble dawning of life in this country, to do all in their power to cast a cloud over it, and to prevent the least hope of our effecting the necessary re-
formations

reforms which are aimed at in our constitution and in our national economy.

But, it seems, I was silent at the passing the resolution. Why, what had I to say? If I thought them too much, I should have been accused of an endeavour to inflame England. If I should represent them as too little, I should have been charged with a design of fomenting the discontents of Ireland into actual rebellion. The Treasury Bench represented that the affair was a matter of state; they represented it truly: I, therefore, only asked, whether they knew their propositions to be such as would satisfy Ireland; for, if they were so, they would satisfy me. This did not indicate that I thought them too ample. In this very silence, however dishonourable to parliament, there was one advantage, that the whole passed, as far as it is gone, with compleat unanimity,

unanimity, and so quietly, that there was no time left to execute any opposition to it out of doors.

In the West-India business, reasoning on what had lately passed in the parliament of Ireland, and on the mode in which it was opened here, I thought I saw much matter of perplexity; but I have now better reason than ever to be pleased with my silence.

If I had spoken, one of the honest and ablest men in the Irish parliament, would have probably thought my observations an endeavour to sow dissention, which he was resolved to prevent; and one of the most ingenious, and one of the most amiable men, that ever graced yours, or any House of parliament, might have looked upon it as a *chimera*. Indeed, in the silence I observed, I was
strongly

strongly countenanced (to say no more of it) by every gentleman of Ireland that I had the honour of conversing with in London. The only word, for that reason, which I spoke, was to restrain a worthy country member, who had received some communication from a great trading place in the county he represented, which, if it had been opened to the house, would have led to a perplexing discussion of one of the most troublesome matters that could arise in this business. I got up to put a stop to it; and, I believe, if you knew what the topic was, you would commend my discretion.

That it should be a matter of public discretion in me to be silent on the affairs of Ireland, is what, on all accounts, I bitterly lament. I stated to the house what I felt; and I felt, as strongly as human sensibility can feel, the extinction of

of my parliamentary capacity when I wished to use it most. When I came into this parliament, just fourteen years ago, then, in vulgar opinion at least, the presiding council of the greatest empire existing, (and perhaps, all things considered, that ever did exist,) obscure and a stranger as I was, I considered myself as raised to the highest dignity to which a creature of our species could aspire. In that opinion, one of the chief pleasures in my situation, what was first and uppermost in my thoughts, was the hope (without injury to this country) to be somewhat useful to the place of my birth and education, which, in many respects, internal and external, I thought ill and impolitically governed: but when I found, that the house, surrendering itself to the guidance, not of an authority grown out of experience, wisdom, and integrity, but of the accidents of court favour, had become

come the sport of the passions of men, at once rash and pusillanimous,—that it had even got into the habit of refusing every thing to reason, and surrendering every thing to force,—all my power of obliging either my country or individuals was gone; all the lustre of my imaginary rank was tarnished, and I felt degraded even by my elevation. I said this, or something to this effect. If it gives umbrage to Ireland, I am sorry for it: it was the reason I gave for my silence, and it was, as far as it went, the true one.

With you, this silence of mine, and of others, was represented as factious, and as a discountenance to the measure of your relief.—Do you, then, think as children?—If it had been our wish to embroil matters, and, for the sake of distressing ministry, to commit the two kingdoms in a dispute, we had nothing
to

to do but (without at all condemning the propositions) to have gone into the commercial detail of the objects of them. It could not have been refused to us; and you know the nature of business so well, that we must have caused such delay, and given rise during that delay to such discussions, as all the wisdom of your favourite minister could never have settled. But, indeed, you mistake your men: we tremble at the idea of a disunion of these two nations. The only thing in which we differ with you, is this, that we do not think your attaching yourselves to the court, and quarrelling with the independent part of this people, is the way to promote the union of two free countries, or the holding them together by the most natural and salutary ties.

You will be frightened when you see
this

this long letter; I smile, when I consider the length of it myself. I never, that I remember, wrote any of the same extent; but it shews me, that the reproaches of the country that I once belonged to, and in which I still have a dearness of interest more than I can justify to reason, make a greater impression on me than I imagined: but parting words are admitted to be a little tedious, because they are not likely to be renewed. — If it will not be making yourself as troublesome to others, as I am to you, I shall be obliged to you, if you will shew this, at their greatest leisure, to the Speaker, to your excellent kinsman, to Mr. Grattan, Mr. Yelverton, and Mr. Daly; all these I have the honour of being personally known to, except Mr. Yelverton, to whom I am only known by my obligation to him. If you live in any habits with my old friend the Provost,

I shall

I shall be glad that he, too, sees this my humble apology.

Adieu!—Once more accept my best thanks for the interest you take in me; believe that it is received by an heart, not yet so old as to have lost its susceptibility.—All here give you the best old-fashioned wishes of the season; and believe me, with the greatest truth, and regard,

My dear Sir,

Your most faithful,

And obliged,

Humble servant,

*Beaconsfield, New-
year's-day, 1780.*

I am frightened at the trouble I give you and our friends; but I recollect you are mostly lawyers, and habituated to
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read long, tiresome papers, and, where your friendship is concerned, without a fee. I am sure, too, you will not act the lawyer, and scrutinize too minutely every expression which my haste may make me use.—I forgot to mention my friend O'Hara, and others; but you will communicate it as you please.

F I N I S.

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